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Artlighten LLC Offers Art Therapy and Traditional Talk Therapy

by Linda Zukauskas
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Four years ago, Genna Riggi, MAAT, LPC, ATR-BC, CLAT, opened Artlighten LLC, 27 Siemon Company Dr., Watertown, to offer art therapy in addition to traditional talk therapy and counseling for children, pre-teens, teens and adults. Today, Artlighten has more therapists and offers access to art outside of therapy, too.

WATERTOWN — Artlighten LLC, 27 Siemon Company Dr., offers art therapy in addition to traditional talk therapy and counseling for children, pre-teens, teens and adults. Owner Genna Riggi, MAAT, LPC, ATR-BC, CLAT, told Voices, “We are unique in that we have five art therapists.” She added, “Clients don’t have to be artistic or want to create something. Art therapy is a non-intimidating approach to expressing oneself, helping to identify emotions and get to the root of long-term or even multi-generational family-of-origin issues. Art can help some people unlock information when words aren’t working for them.”

Noting that there can be a stigma around art projects that adults create for themselves, Ms. Riggi explained, "There's an idea that, once someone reaches adulthood, that person is no longer supposed to make art, that it's just for children."

"But I think that adults need art and that childlike spirit where it's okay to get messy and create without judgement or expectations."

Each client's story unfolds at the pace they want and need.

"We're there to guide them and hold that space for them."

Ms. Riggi started her business in 2018, growing it over the last four years to increase her team and run workshops open to community members who would like include art in their lives outside of art as a therapeutic tool.

"Last fall, we expanded by 1,000 square feet so we would have the space to offer a wide range of no and low-cost workshops for all ages with enough start times to accommodate anyone's schedule. We can also rent out that space to local artists."

The extensive menu of art workshops includes wide variety of mediums and content, including printmaking, which was an area of focus for Ms. Riggi during her formal education.

She studied fine arts and print making as an undergraduate and art therapy in grad school.

A rare, refurbished Vandercook press will be installed before the end of summer so that people can learn and practice several processes of printmaking

"People will be able to learn techniques and maybe make something useful like a wedding or party invitation or custom business cards. The way we see it, artmaking is cathartic and we can help people access the experience aside from art therapy."

Offering this kind of experience to the community relates to why Ms. Riggi enjoys her career.

"My family was very close as I was growing up and a big piece of why and who I am. I don't think I'd be doing this work without that background. I learned what it is like to have empathy. I really want to help people and think that's a big part of the human experience. When we help others, we help ourselves because connecting with others is a great way to be a human."

“Connecting through art and sharing that passion and wealth of knowledge allows others to find their own way through those mediums.”

The Watertown location was selected because of its ease of access and character. “That character speaks to our work because the building is unique yet cozy.”

For those who are interested in therapy, the modality at Artlighten is a mix of art therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy.

“That modality lends to reframing. A lot of what we do is using metaphors as clients sit where they want and create what they want in a welcoming, artistic environment.”

As a result, clients are empowered and Ms. Riggi said, “We remind them that they’re the ones showing up and applying these tools to their lives.

“They’re being brave as they apply the learning and make connections, knowing that it will be okay.”

She can often see a physical reaction as the mental and emotional transformations take place. “It’s almost like they forget to breathe before they begin to create art. Then, they become more fluid.”

Her favorite part of her job is being in the space and watching clients as well as therapists grow. “I don’t like to say I supervise our clinicians. I prefer the term mentor.”

Although she never finds enough hours in the day to do all that she wants to do, Ms. Riggi is happy with her work and feels she’s matured as a business owner as well as therapist and artist.

“When something is genuine, it’s easy. This is something I love doing and it’s a pleasure for me to meet such incredible people. What other job would give me such diverse connections?

“Every day just confirms that this is what I’m meant to be doing,” she said.

“Art therapy is a narrow field but growing and I’m always available to answer questions from those who are studying art therapy. I’ve learned to put my energy, thoughts, and hard work out there — to manifest my vision. When you are able to manifest energy to a greater good, it comes back to you in a positive way.”

More information is available at www.artlightenct.com and openings are available.

Appointments may be made by emailing genna@artlightenct.com or calling 860-269-5991.